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The importance of by-catches for economic viability, raw material supply and employment in the food fish industry An introduction

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An introduction

by

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September 1985.
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Summary

The Danish fisheries sector is today the largest in the European Common Market considering total sales of fish and fishery products. Achieving this position has required that steadily increasing supplies of raw material be available to the processing industry. Danish fishermen have not been able to achieve this, and it has led to a growing import trade. The current regulations in the Common fisheries policy do not give Danish fishermen many opportunities for increasing catches of food fish.

Production of fillets of cod and similar species has become more important and now comprises over 35% of sales in the food fish industry. Employment in the food fish industry totalled about 8400 people in 1983.

Dividing vessels into categories according to the type of fishing carried out, it is estimated that the cutter fleet which alternates between fishing food fish and industrial fish for meal plants, landed about 58,000 tonnes of cod and similar species (gadoids) in 1983. Cutters that fish for various species of industrial fish landed ca. 14,000 tonnes of gadoids. This means that about 33% of total Danish landings of these species were supplied by these vessels. Relative to total employment in the food fish industry, this fleet is therefore responsible for supporting 1100 of the jobs in this industry.

It is important for employment that the processing industry has an even and stable supply of raw material. Since

fisheries are seasonal, it is important for the industry that seasons can be smoothed out and are timed in relation to each other so that species with similar processing characteristics can replace each other. It appears that the fishery for gadoid species can best meet the requirements of the processing industry, either as a directed fishery or as a by-catch in the industrial fishery. It is perhaps in this context the strong growth in the production of fillets from these species should be seen.

The fishery for gadoids can be carried out the whole year with the bulk coming from cod from the Baltic in the first quarter, and cod, haddock and pollock from the North Sea and the Skagerrak in the third quarter of the year. The by-catch of gadoids in the industrial fishery is also conveniently concentrated in the first and fourth quarters. This contribution is especially important in the fourth quarter in securing employment and improving the contribution margin in the food fishing industry.

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